

SUSAN or KEZIAH?

By LAWRENCE PERRY

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Judge Crane, put the last shutter over the front window of his store, along the bar across and snapped the padlock. Then he turned and gazed thoughtfully along the turnpike to where a single light glimmered through a grove of cherry trees. The judge always became sentimental at this hour of the evening. As a matter of fact he was in love and, what is more, admitted it to himself. This takes rare courage sometimes, but it takes even rarer courage under certain conditions to admit it to any one else. That was what bothered Judge Crane.

The judge was not much over fifty years old. His store, the one town store, yielded good profits. He was a bachelor, not a widower; was well preserved, a former judge in the town court and always a deacon. Oh, no; he was not ashamed of his personal assets. The trouble was that he was not quite sure with whom he was in love. There were two of them—two maiden sisters, Susan Appleby and Kezia Appleby. Both of them appealed to Judge Crane in one way or another, and for ten years he had been trying to decide which one appealed to him the more. But thus far his efforts had yielded him little satisfaction.

He paced thoughtfully up and down the porch, with his hands locked under his coat-tails. He closed his eyes, and the picture of Kezia drifted slowly across his mind. It was in church that he loved her most. He could see her now in her pew just in front of his. Her shoulders did not come very far above the high back seat, and a few curls straggled from under the black bonnet. One eye was hazel, the other a watery blue, and her hands were folded demurely in her lap. She wore a black waist cut down a little at the throat and edged with lavender silk and lace, and she had a humorous little stimpet at the corners of her mouth. On Sundays the stimpet was allowed to fade, but the telltale lines remained.

There was no nonsense about Susan—tall, straight, angular, her bonnet perked up straight on her head like a grenadier, blue eyes and a straight, tight shut mouth. She could say things, and she got up church societies and missionary societies. Judge Crane sighed.

A few minutes later he unclasped his hands and transferred them gleefully to the armholes of his vest. He had come to a decision. He would consult a third party. But whom? There were two he had in mind, Zebulon, the brother, and Matilda, the eldest sister, a widow. All in all, he thought Zebulon would be the better of the two. Yes, he would go to his old friend and confessor all. He would secure information as to the qualities of both from the standpoint of one who had spent his life with them, and he would also make inquiry as to which one would most likely award his suit with a favorable answer.

"Hello, Judge?" It was Zebulon himself who stumped up the steps and sat down at the top with a grunt. "Nice evening."

"Hello, Zeb—um—yes, a tolerable evening. How air ye?" And the judge seated himself beside the prospective adjuster of his destiny.

"About as well as a man kin be with a parcel of women folks about him all the time," grumbled Zebulon, filling his pipe.

"What's the matter of 'em?" queried the judge, apparently unconcerned.

"Matter?" sneered Zebulon. "Matter? Why, everything's another—everything's a matter. In their places, church societies, housecleaning, visiting, church prayer meeting, entertaining the parson an' talk, talk, talk, talk, but talkin' from sunrise to supper. Bah! Women is well enough in their places, but three on 'em is too darned much. Two on 'em old maids too! Why don't Providence send some one to marry 'em? It ain't right, it's ag'in' nature, for one man to be pestered so."

"Um—waal, that is kind o' bad, Zeb. I'm sorry they're kind o' bad, because I was jest a-goin' to ask yer honest opinion which one to pick out. I'm a-goin' to git married, you know. And Judge Crane blew his nose vigorously.

"Arrump! Huh!" Zebulon sat up. The judge sat with his jaws tight shut and his eyes stared fixedly into the road. Zebulon snorted again and regained his self control. Had heaven smiled on him at last? Had he said too much? He knew whom he wished married. Kezia! Would do, but Susan was the one to whose wedding he would dance all the way. He recalled her masterly ways, her trenchant tongue. Was it to be stilled for him by the bonds of matrimony? He turned to the judge.

"Waal," he said, drawing his handkerchief across his eyes. "I kin talk an' growl, but when the pinch comes, Judge, I don't see how I kin live without 'em. Kezia is good, Judge, but Susan, she is the one for ye. I know. She wants to git married. She said herself 'twouldn't do her, although Lord knows she don't need it. She's good an' kind an' lovin', an' she's got a good strong mind—a good strong mind. Yea, sir, I recommend Susan," concluded Zebulon.

"Well," said the judge, "ye ought to know, Zeb. Wants to get married, does she? Waal, she would 'a' been long ago had I not been afraid to ask her. I'm scared yet, Zeb, to tell the truth. What I want is the iron broken, eh?"

Zebulon was too overjoyed to stop at anything which might question the judge in his quest. He actually offered to take the judge to his store, state the

case and then leave the two alone. For reply the judge rose decidedly to his feet. "Come," he said.

So they trudged along the road together, Zebulon quietly radiant, the judge stern and determined.

Ten minutes later they entered the Appleby house. A raucous, twangy voice came from the parlor.

"She's in there," whispered Zebulon, and he pushed open the door and entered with his hand reaching back holding the skirt of the judge's coat.

Both were there—Kezia and Susan. "How do do, Judge?" they exclaimed, rising. But the judge made reply by pushing Zebulon forward.

"Susan," said Zebulon, stammering guiltily. He knew Susan could see right through him. "Susan," he repeated, "ab—ahem. The judge, he—well—ah—"

"Well, ah what?" exclaimed Susan, with sharp impatient intonation.

"The judge," repeated Zebulon weakly. "Waal, I bring him here—O Lor!" and Zebulon dashed for the door. He stopped at the sill and, pointing at the judge, added, "The judge, see, there he is!" Then he disappeared.

The judge was frozen into a dignified statue. He could see now that it was Susan, but he dared not. Suddenly he thought of Matilda. Ah, she would break the ice for him. Matilda! His face flushed.

"Ladies," he said in sepulchral tones, "will ye kindly inform yer widowed sister Matilda that I desire to see her? Alone," he added.

The sisters swept out of the room, confident that Zebulon and the judge had suddenly gone crazy. Then Matilda entered. She proffered her hand in welcome, and the judge seized it as a drowning man grasps at a straw. He held on. Here at least was something tangible.

And then—well, Susan was not half so tangible. Matilda!

Ten minutes later Zebulon peeked into the parlor. The judge was very close to Matilda, and he was holding her hands. Everything was very still.

"Well, I'll be darned!" said Zebulon.

Brindle an' Extinct Color.

"Time was when no farm was complete unless there was a brindle steer in the lot and no home was what it should be unless you could find a brindle dog in the yard," said a man from the country. "At the time when I was growing up the boy who didn't have a brindle dog to chase rabbits and hunt coons with was simply not in the race with the other fellows of the country-side, and the man who didn't have a brindle steer among his lot—well, he wasn't in it either. Brindle steers and brindle dogs were a part and parcel of the countryman's outfit. Now we rarely find these creatures at the country home. What has become of the brindle steer and the brindle dog? Steam and electricity may have crowded the steer out of the business to some extent, but there are still steers abroad in the land, and they are telling us of old, pulling wagons, dragging logs and doing other useful things. But they are not brindle steers. As for the brindle dog, steam and electricity and other things of this sort could have had no possible connection with his disappearance, but he has disappeared just the same. I do not know why it is, but he has gone, gone with the brindle steer, and I would like to know just why it is that these old friends of the country boy are counted among the things that are no more, and perhaps forever."—New Orleans Times-Democrat.

Alcohol in Bread.

"You could get drunk on fresh bread if you could eat enough of it at one time," said a chemist to a woman customer.

"I don't believe it," the woman answered.

"And yet it is a fact," the chemist pursued. "It used to be thought that the alcohol which bread in its fermenting generated escaped out in the baking, but Thomas Bolas, a distinguished scientist, proved that bread after it is ready for eating still contains alcohol. I myself analyzed the other day twelve loaves of fresh bread and found that they contained on the average alcohol in the proportion of 314 per cent. When, therefore, you have eaten 100 pounds of bread, you have consumed five ounces of alcohol. That is quite as much alcohol as you would get in a pint of whisky."

"You, madam, eat, I fancy, about 350 pounds of bread a year. That is 3,500 pounds in ten years. In those 3,500 pounds there are 175 ounces of alcohol, which is the same as seventeen quarts of whisky. Think of it! Every ten years you consume seventeen quarts of whisky with your bread."

"I don't believe it," said the woman. —Philadelphia Record.

Lunacy and Genius.

"Is there any sure test by which a fool can be distinguished from a wise man?" asked a pupil of Esquiro, the well known specialist, and the latter replied by inviting him to take breakfast with him the following morning.

When he arrived, the pupil found two other guests, one of whom was elegantly dressed and apparently well educated, while the other was rather uncouth, noisy and extremely self confident.

After breakfast the pupil rose to take leave, and as he shook hands with Esquiro he said to him: "The problem is very easy after all. That quiet, well dressed man is certainly distinguished in some line, whereas the other is undoubtedly a lunatic and ought to be locked up."

"You are wrong, my friend," replied Esquiro, with a smile. "That quiet, well dressed man, who seems to talk so rationally, has for years labored under the delusion that he is God the Father, whereas the other man, whose uncouthness and self confidence have surprised you, is M. Honore de Balzac, the greatest French writer of the day."

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PAUS AND PINKSTER.
The Dutch Easter Time Festival in the Mohawk Valley.

Next to New Year's day Paus and Pinkster were the more popular and generally observed holidays of the old Dutch in the Mohawk valley. Paus was Easter and Pinkster was Whit-sunday. Pinkster was particularly a gala day, when young and old gave themselves up to jollity and boisterous fun. The joys of the day began in the morning with sports, outdoor games and contests and ended late at night with indoor games and dancing. There were "egg buttoning" and "riding at the ring." The latter sport was probably a rural adaptation of the tournaments of the days of chivalry. The necessary arrangement was a cord tied across the road just above the heads of men on horseback. From this cord was suspended by a short string a finger ring. Each horseman was provided with a short, sharp pointed stick about the size of a meat skewer, which was held between the first finger and thumb. The competitors were obliged to ride at full gallop under the cord and attempt to thrust their "lances" through the ring and carry it off three times. When one of the contestants had accomplished this he was chased by all the other contestants. If he succeeded in reaching the goal without being caught he was the winner. The prize was the payment by the other contestants of the bill for himself and his best girl at the dance and supper to be given in the evening. If, however, he was caught he was obliged to foot the bill for his captor and his best girl.

For a week before Pinkster the inhabitants, black and white, began to make ready for the festival by erecting booths of boughs from the thickly leaved trees and shrubs on a place in or near the village chosen because of its convenience and beauty. In these booths the tables were set with good things to eat and drink. Besides the "egg buttoning" and "riding at the ring," there were impromptu horse races, wrestling matches and occasional "scraps." The music for dancing was provided by the fiddle and jews-harp. Pinkster was a great occasion for the slaves. On this day they had unusual liberty to enjoy themselves according to their own ideas. One way of doing so was a dance, which was no doubt a relic of one of the many religious dances brought from Africa by the captured slaves. The music was obtained from a huge drumlike instrument four or five feet long and a foot in diameter, covered at either end by a tightly stretched sheepskin. This was held between the legs of the largest and oldest slave in the community. This drum he would beat with palm and fingers, and all the time he sang a wordless song, which as the excitement increased would become wild and weird and was accompanied by muscular contortions, waggings and twisting of the head and rolling of the eyes. One after another of the slaves would join in the dance as the spirit moved him or her to do so till the musician was surrounded by a ring of black and yellow twisting, wriggling, hysterical negroes, who for the time were thousands of miles away in the heart of superstitious Africa. One by one they would fall to the ground exhausted, when their places would be taken by others who were just beginning to feel the moving of the spirit. It was not unusual for this wild dance to continue through two days.—New York Tribune.

Several True Bills.
It is of course true that a jury, theoretically, is composed of a set of unprejudiced men, with open minds; still there may be occasions when a slight personal feeling invades their ranks. Such was evidently the thought borne in upon the tailor who, rising to state his case and having declined the services of a lawyer for reasons best known to himself, looked over the jurymen and then turned to the judge.

"It's no use for me to tell you about this case, your honor," he said dejectedly, "not unless you discuss that jury and get in a new lot. There isn't a man among 'em but owes me something for clothes." —Savannah Daily.

Bodily Brought Up Soldiers.
During an official massacre at the village of Kouklush the Turkish commandant—a fat major—slept and smoked in the shade of a tree near the scene of carnage. The trumpet sounded for the assault and the soldiers proceeded to rob, kill, burn and violate. The trumpet then sounded the retreat, but the troop refused to obey, and the fat major continued to sleep and smoke. When spoken to about the excesses of his men, he replied: "What can one do? They are so badly brought up!" —Paris Maceodine.

Novel Oyster Parties.
Oyster parties are the great diversion of the Spanish gentlemen who pay family visits to Vigo. The party goes out in a large flat bottomed boat. Then the oysters are fished up, opened and eaten on the spot, and a prize goes to the guest who can show most shells at the end of the day. In excuse it may be said that the Vigo oyster is small, for a prize winner will sometimes show as many as 200 shells.

A Waste of Breath.
"You can always tell an Englishman," began the Britisher boastfully. "But it would only be a waste of breath," interrupted the Yankee, "because he thinks he knows it all." —Philadelphia Ledger.

A Worker.
Knicker—Can he accomplish much? Knoch—I should say so. He can do as much as the man who didn't mean to.—Harper's Bazar.

An all round way placed the following placard over his coal bin: "Not to be used except in case of fire."

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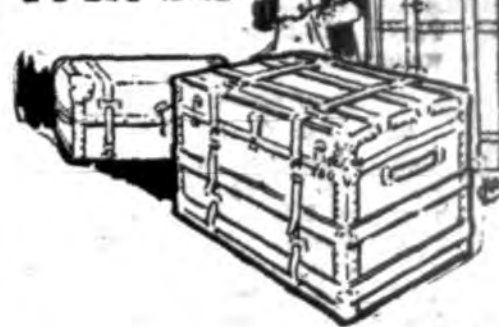
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